Listing of the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of claims:

1. (Currently amended) A plasmid-free clone of Escherichia coli strain DSM 6601, which strain is identical in its genome to DSM 6601 Escherichia coli strain containing plasmids pMut1 and pMut2.

2. (Currently amended) The method of preparing a plasmid-free clone according to Claim 1, comprising the following steps:

a) introducing a resistance gene into plasmids pMut1 and pMut2,

b) introducing the *sacB* gene into the plasmids obtained in step a) so as to produce a pMut1 plasmid carrying a resistance gene and a *sacB* gene, and a pMut2 plasmid carrying a resistance gene and a *sacB* gene,

c) introducing the altered pMut1 and pMut2 plasmids obtained in step b) into the [[E.]] Escherichia coli strain DSM 6601 substantially simultaneously, and cultivating the strain obtained thereby under conditions in which the naturally occurring ~~plasmids~~ pMut1 and pMut2 plasmids are displaced by the altered pMut1 and pMut2 plasmids obtained in step b); and

d) cultivating the clones obtained in step c) that substantially only permit the growth of bacteria that lack the *sacB* gene, so that the Escherichia coli containing the altered pMut1 and pMut2 plasmids do not grow, and thereby is produced a plasmid-free clone of Escherichia coli strain DSM 6601.

3. (Original) The method according to Claim 2, characterized in that the resistance genes are present in an expression cassette.

4. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 2, characterized in that the resistance genes are selected under tetracycline resistance or kanamycin resistance.

5. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 2, characterized in that plasmid pMut1 is marked with a tetracycline resistance cassette and the *sacB* gene and that the original plasmid pMut2 is marked with a kanamycin resistance cassette and the *sacB* gene.

6. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 5, in which the bacteria transformed with plasmid pMut1, that is marked with a tetracycline resistance cassette and the *sacB* gene, are cultivated on plates containing tetracycline and subsequently on plates containing saccharose, and that after elimination of plasmid pMut1 in the first step elimination of plasmid pMut2 takes place by cultivation on kanamycin plates and further cultivation on saccharose plates.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)